[H. P. Cook]

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[Folkstuff - Rangelore?]

Fuller, Chas. R.

Rangelore

Cottle Co.

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H. P. Cook, 76, was born near Peoria, Ill., but moved with his father to Texas in 1866, first settling near Veil Station in Parker co. In 1867, moved to Indian Creek about 18 mi. N.W. of Fort Worth, in Tarrant co. Here, as a boy, he learned to ride a horse, and become thoroughly accustomed to frontier life. They moved to Jack Co. in 1871, settling 7 mi. E. of Jacksboro, on W. Fork of the Trinity River. Worked as cowboy for Hillery Bedford, and at age 10 went “Up the Trail” to Fort Dodge, Kan. Was also employed by John Chisum and drove cattle up the famous “Chisolm Trail”. Was in Indian raids, and was present at famous trial of Indian Chiefs, Big Tree and Santana. In 1878, moved to Cleburne, Johnson co., then on to Lamar co. Moved west again to Young co. in 1888, and pioneered in 1890 in Cottle co. As a dugout pioneer in Cottle, was visited by Will Rogers on his first run-a-way from home in Okla., keeping Rogers on his place for a month or more. Cook quit farming to move to Paducah, where he is now engaged as proprietor of the Cook Hotel.

“I was born near Peoria, Ill., March 26, 1861. As my father had been a soldier in the Confederate Army, after the war it wasn't so healthy for him in that part of the country, so he moved to Texas in 1866 to start life anew.

“We spent the first year at Veil Station, Parker County, then, in 1867, moved to Indian Creek in Tarrant county, locating about 18 miles from Fort Worth, Texas. At that time, Fort Worth was about “Where the West ended”. As I remember it, there were just a few frame buildings on the west side of the square.

“Four years later, in 1871, we moved to Jack county, and settled on the West Fork of the Trinity River, about 7 miles E. of Jacksboro. Indian raids were so severe about that time, that we lived in Jacksboro, which was then called Fort Richardson. as I remember it.

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“Speaking about Indian raids, I well remember the excitement in the community when we heard about the famous wagon train murder, in which seven freighters were killed and scalped. Must have been about 1872. General Sherman happened to be down there about that time, and it looked so bad to him that he just had the Indians responsible for it, 'Big Tree', “Santana”, and “Santank', brought back from their reservation in the Territory and turned then over to the civil authorities for trial, instead of giving them a military trial. Santank was killed when he tried to escape, but the other two were tried there in Jacksboro and given the death penalty. I was there at the trial, and will say that the excitement was running plenty high. There were over a thousand people there, besides a lot of Indians. I think one of the Indians was finally pardoned, and the other committed suicide.

“Along about the time of the wagon murder, there were other raids pulled off. The way it was, these Indians were assigned to their reservations, but they would get permission to go on hunts, or just slip out, and go on raids instead. It was a funny thing to me, but they nearly always picked a moonlight night for these scalping parties of theirs. They

would steal all the horses and cattle, too.Lots of times they would come in broad daylight. I remember once when a band of them came through in their war paint. I was out in the pasture. Just as soon as I caught sight of them, I climbed a big mesquite tree and hid myself the best I could so they wouldn't see me. Well, they went on by, and made a raid in the community and scalped 3 some of the settlers (I don't remember who they were, now) and stole a lot of horses. I still think it was just a miracle that they didn't see me in that tree.

“Yes, it is true that I went 'Up the Trail' when I was only 10 years old. It was in 1871 that I made my first trip. [At?] that/ time I was working for [Hillery?] Bedford, who lived on Black Creek, near Decatur, Tex. He had several thousand head rounded up to take to Fort Dodge, Kan., consisting of native Spanish cattle (longhorns), and including steers, cows and yearlings. I think there were 12 cowboys and a chuck wagon. Now, I wasn't taken along as a mascot, but as I was working for [?] Bedford and doing regular cowboy work, he told the boas to let me go if I wanted to. I made a regular hand on the trail, too, and took my place on the shifts at night, after the cattle were bedded down. You know, back in those days, lots of boys were good cowboys by the time they were 10 years old. But the next oldest boy on this drive was 18. I don't think there was anybody body else in that part of the country/ of my age that was doing regular cowboy work on the ranches.

“It has been so long ago, I don't remember so much about the details of the trip. I remember we crossed Red River somewhere about Spanish Fort, and bumped right into a band of Indians the very first thing. We had explicit instructions from the Government not to molest the Indians in any way, so we were going pretty careful, not knowing what might happen. Well, it was a funny thing; The bucks had sent the squaws out in advance and they were waving their red blankets and shawls, which almost 4 caused a stampede. We soon found out, though, that what they wanted was 'toll' - that is, they wanted some of our cattle far crossing their reservation.We cut out some of the scrawny beeves for them, and they gave us no further trouble. But it was a sight to see how quick those beeves disappeared. They must have been pretty hungry for beef, because as soon as they were

killed, they didin't wait to cook it, but devoured/ it raw. It wasn't any time at all before they were picking the bones.

“Well, we passed through a lot of Indian reservations and saw a lot of different tribes, but they were all just Indians to me. I remember they said some of them were Comanches, some Kiowas and some Cherokees. Nearly all of them wanted toll, and this cut our hard down some before we got to Fort Dodge. We were more afraid of the Comanches, as they were considered the most warlike of all the tribes.

“I made another trip to Fort Dodge with the Bedford cattle in the fall of the same year, and over the same trail. We had a tougher trip this time, because there was almost continuous rain, snow and sleet all the way up. We had three shifts of the guards at night, after the cattle were bedded down, and I took my place on these shifts along with the rest of them. The trip must have taken about six weeks,./ going and returning, It was really tough, sleeping on the ground this trip, it was so wet and cold. I had just a couple of cotton quilts, and by morning there wasn't a dry thread in then, it was so wet. I used my saddle for a pillow. [We?] would move the fire over, and flop down on the ground where the fire had been, which would stay warm for a while. 5 We were struck by a 'Blue Norther' and the next thing it was sleeting. The wind was blowing so hard that it cut like a knife. I had to dig into the ground that night, to keep from freezing. This herd was gathered up in the counties of Johnson, Hill and Ellis, and must have been 3,500. I heard some say it was 5,000, but I don't believe they could drive that many in a herd.

“The last trip I made 'Up the Trail' was in 1874. They were John Chisum's cattle, and were rounded up in Denton and Tarrant counties. It was a big herd, too, at least 3,000. Some said it was 6,000 head, but I don't see how that many could be handled on a drive, unless it was made in two herds. We crossed Red River at Doan's Crossing and took up the Chisolm Trail. I have heard people say over three million head crossed at Doans in one year, but you know that's a lot of cattle.

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“We handled the Indians about as usual, paying them a little toll now and then to keep them satisfied. But we had a new experience when we got to the Kansas state line. We ran into a bunch of settlers. The cowboys always called then 'nesters'. Now, they didn't like for these trail herds to cross their lands at all, and there they were gathered in groups, armed with shotguns and clubs, to force us to narrow the trail down as much as possible and keep the cattle moving. They were afraid they would lose some of their grass. You know, later on the Kansas Legislature passed a law to keep cattle from south of a certain line from being driven at all into their state. They claimed it was to prevent the spread of the so-called 'Texas 6 Fever'. It was in June of that year that they almost came to war with the cattlemen coming up the trail. There might have been a war, too, but word came through from Washington, granting the Texas cattlemen the right to drive their cattle through the Indian Territory, and to the Kansas market.

“About cowboy lore; I don't remember so much of it. I don't talk it either, like some of the old trail drivers, because my cowboy days were over even before I came to Cottle county in 1890. I have heard about driving across the quicksand to get water for the cattle, when the rivers were dry, but on the drives I made we had more water than we wanted; they were all during the wet seasons. I can tell you one thing, though, a cow wont start across a swollen stream until she noses the calf around to the upstream side, and then the calf just rests snugly up against that mammy cow's left side. Just the opposite with a mare, though; they swim across with the colts on the downstream side. I think it is because the mare is a little longer and breaks the water so that the colt has still water to swim in on the downstream side. It would be hard to say which side is the best, but I guess nature just takes care of that.

“Well, we'd usually stay in Fort Dodge about a week, and of course, after coming such a long distance, the cowboys were always ready to celebrate. They'd ride around the square and discharge their sixshooters until there wasn't any ammunition left, then quit. Nearly all the cattle were coming to Fort Dodge then, and the place was full of cowboys, and they

usually 7 pulled a few wild pranks before their return to Texas. You know, the cowboy is noted for pulling pranks.

“Well, we moved to Lamar Bounty for a while, then went to Young county. I lived there about two years. As I had got married, we decided to go further west and make a new home, so in 1890 we came out here and settled in the Ogden community, about 12 miles east of Paducah. W.G.Morris and John Wilson were the only families living there at that time, so Mrs. Cook and I are actual pioneers in this county.

“You know, there are drawbacks to every country. I guess the most complaint here is sandstorms and drouths, but some years we don't have either. Besides, most everybody who has lived [here?] very long have about got used to it, even the gyp water. Even the top soil seems to have gyp in it, and I suppose in some places more [than?] others. I remember we once made up a batch of sorghum molasses, sometime back in the 90's, and do you know at the bottom of the vat there was at least six inches of solid gyp.

“In 1896, we moved to about 5 miles west of Paducah, into the Fairview community, now called Valley View, and several years later moved to Paducah. Mrs. Cook and I run the Cook Hotel here. We are accustomed to this country and think the people here are as good as they are anywhere.

“There is one happening I didn't tell you about. In fact, I didn't think anything of it much at the time. It is about Will Rogers. I think it must have been about May, 1894, when we were living/ in a dugout in the Ogden community. As I remember it, it 8 was in the late spring. One morning, a dilapidated buggy, drawn by a small bay pony, rolled up to my front yard gate and stopped. It must have been about 12 o'clock, because it was just at dinner time. I could see that the driver of the buggy was a loose-jointed, bow-logged boy, about 15 or 16 years old. As I started to the gate to see what he wanted, he hailed me and said: 'Say, mister, don't you want a hand?'.

“Well, all the settlers were having a tough time that year to make ends meet. A long drouth was on and nobody had raised anything much. I was hunting and trapping wolves and varmints and selling the hides, in order to get money to feed my family. During some of the long drouths that occurred back in those days, many of the early settlers resorted to [gathering?] bones off the prairies and hauling them to market 65 miles away for the paltry sum of three or four dollars a load, just so they could live 'til times got better. So I just told the boy that I didn't have a job to offer him, but to hitch his pony and come on in to dinner. He said his name was Will Rogers, and it was, too, because I saw him afterwards in a little town in New Mexico where we both happened to be at the same time.

“That boy stayed with me for a month or more. He went out with me on my hunting trips, and he helped do the farm chores. He was an interesting chap and was a big help to me. I really wish I could have kept him. After he had been there awhile, he and I began to get better acquainted. I treated him like a guest, and soon won his confidence. He told me that he had left home because his dad wanted to send him off to school, but he wanted 9 to be a cowboy and make some money. He was anxious to get a job on a ranch. It wasn't long before he sold the horse and buggy/ for $45.00 to a man by the name of Cunningham, and then he bought a little mustang mare from Frank Easley for $15.00. I could see that he was getting ready to go. He said he was going further west.

“Well, the mustang wasn't broke to ride, so I roped him for the boy and helped him saddle up. Then he got on him, and you should have seen that pony pitch. He was plunging and bucking so wild all over the place that I thought he would be thrown and maybe badly hurt. That 'Strawberry Roan' that you've heard so much about didn't have much on that little mustang. But Will Rogers just stuck to him like a tick.

“He finally told me goodbye and said the next time I heard from him he would be ridin' the range. I didn't see him again until that time I met him in New Mexico, like I told you, but I saw a lady who runs a hotel at Plainview, who told me that it wasn't long after he left my place 'til he showed up there. Said he stayed at her place a little while and then got a job

on a ranch out there, but didn't stay on it long. Later, I got a letter from him and he wrote me about everything that happened to him after he left my place. That letter got lost and we never could find it again. I would give a lot if I could find that letter now.

“The old dugout where I lived when he stopped with me is about fifteen miles east of Paducah, about a couple of miles to the right of the highway and beyond the Ogden schoolhouse. 10 You turn in at the old Evans Place and go south. It has been a long time since I saw it, but there isn't anything there but a hole in the ground, almost filled up, and a few rocks laying around. I guess the settlers out here nearly all quit living in dugouts by 1900.